



THE ART OF ASGARD

Thor: Ragnarok is the God of Thunder's most colourful adventure yet. We spoke with Visual Development Supervisor Andy Park about designing the look of Hela, Korg, and Taika Waititi's vision for the Thor trilogy closer.

Words Alesha Kolbe



In his third standalone adventure, Thor (Chris Hemsworth) faces against the threat of Ragnarok – the impending destruction of his homeworld Asgard and life as he knows it. Hela, Goddess of Death (the wonderful Cate Blanchett), will stop at nothing to bring about the end of Thor and sit on the throne.

For Andy Park, Visual Development Supervisor on *Thor: Ragnarok*, working in the Marvel Cinematic Universe has been a dream come true.

"I've been working for Marvel Studios for almost eight years now," he tells *STACK* over the phone from the States, where he's busy with *Ant-Man and the Wasp* and *Captain Marvel*. "In my adolescent years I read exclusively Marvel comic books, and I dreamed of becoming a comic book artist. I dropped out of college because I was hired by Image Comics – specifically by Rob Liefeld, the creator of *Deadpool*. I did an *X-Men* comic, and then in 2005, I made the switch over to doing conceptual art. I feel like I've come full circle, and it's definitely a dream come true."

Thor: Ragnarok was an exponentially more colourful film than *Thor* and *The Dark World*, and according to Park,

that was due to the director, Taika Waititi.

"Kevin Feige, Louis D'Esposito, and Victoria Alonso, the leadership of Marvel, they're so smart. They know they can use talent that's not necessarily already big; like James Gunn and Joss Whedon

antlers, and her cape flowing, and her dark mask – that all really showed how sinister she was," Park explains, before pausing to reflect on some of her other looks throughout the film. "The majority of my time spent on this film was with Hela and designing her – I probably spent about four to six months just on her character design alone."

Of course, we had to bring up Korg, the hilarious stony gladiator voiced and motion-captured by the director himself. Park notes that the main challenge with Korg was to ensure he was distinguishable from *Fantastic Four's* The Thing.

"Initially we were told that they needed a bunch of gladiators that were going to be fighting in an arena. I hired two artists known for their creature concepts – Tully Summers and Ian Joyner. Tully's art was the one chosen by Taika for Korg. We had to make him greyish-blue to tell him apart from The Thing, but we had no idea at the time that Taika was interested in playing the part, or that he was going to end up being more of a comedic character.

"Tully also came up with the design that we ended up using for Meek, Korg's sidekick. Taika fell in love with both designs and loved what we ended up bringing to the final film." **S**

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– they weren't blockbuster directors before they signed with Marvel. These heads look beyond that, they look at talent, they look at passion, and they knew Taika could take this film, and the franchise, in a completely reinvigorated direction."

Park and his team on *Ragnarok* were tasked with the creation of Hela, and how she would look in the film.

"She looks the best in the Valkyrie scene, in her full regalia with her

• *Thor: Ragnarok* is out on March 7



BIG TROUBLE FOR THOR...

We asked Kiwi filmmaker Taika Waititi about working in the MCU and bringing a bit of *Big Trouble in Little China's* Jack Burton to the character of Thor. Words Scott Hocking

The Marvel Cinematic Universe is renowned for enlisting interesting and unlikely filmmakers to put their own spin on the brand; guys like James Gunn on *Guardians of the Galaxy*, and now *Hunt for the Wilderpeople's* Taika Waititi. But how much creative freedom does the studio allow?

"They gave me a lot of creative freedom, actually," Waititi tells *STACK*. "I think that's to their credit and what makes all their films successful is that they get people who aren't the obvious choice and just let them run it, knowing that they can corral and guide them along the way because they've made all these big films before."

"So I was very relaxed and I knew I was going to be guided in the right way. If I veered off the path, someone would say, 'No, get in your lane, this is where we're going.' It was a very collaborative affair."

Waititi says it was business as usual when making the transition from small indie films to a big tentpole blockbuster. "I'd done a lot of big commercials as well, so it wasn't a new experience to be on a big set. We shot for 85 days principle photography; my films are usually 25–30 and it was just a matter of keeping up the energy for that long."

The director has stated in the past that he wanted to bring a *Big Trouble in Little China* vibe to *Thor: Ragnarok* – but did he succeed?

"Yeah," he grins. "Kurt Russell's one of my favourite actors and I grew up with films like *Big Trouble in Little China*. What I love about Jack Burton in that film is that all he wants is his truck back, and he goes on this big adventure. That's what I wanted Chris [Hemsworth] to do. All he wants is his hammer back and to go home."

"Chris is legitimately funny, he's such a hilarious guy, so I thought I'd utilise that and use it to our advantage. I thought it was underutilised in the other films."